

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

September 6, 2007

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Elsie Fetterman, Janet Gorth, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Tom McAuley, Stephanie O'Keefe, Barbara Sutherland, David Yaukey

Select Board Liaison: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator)

Guests: Marga Coler, Jane Price, Alice Epstein, Marge Babb, and Lisa White

Welcome:

Barbara Sutherland, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:07 AM. COA members introduced themselves to **Marga Coler** and **Lisa White**. Marga is a retired professor of nursing and a psychiatric clinical specialist. She will be working part time in the Counseling Center. Lisa White is a Registered Nurse. She will be our new nurse for Senior Health Services at the Senior Center and her official title will be Senior Health Services Director. She is in her second year in the BS to PhD Nursing program at UMass.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the July 12, 2007 meeting were approved and accepted.

Senior Trust Treasurer's Report:

Doris reported that there were some donations to the Friends. They have been deposited in the Trust account until the Friends account is set up. An annual PC Report was sent to the Attorney General's office. The treasurer's report was approved and accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

Meet our New Nurse, Lisa White:

Nancy welcomed Lisa and expressed that everyone is thrilled with her, our top choice of 10 candidates for the nursing position. Lisa's regular schedule will be Mondays and Thursdays from 10-12 and 12:30-2:30. She will begin seeing patients on September 13. The official Grand Opening of the Senior Health Services will be October 29 at 2-3:30 PM. The VNA and Hospice of Cooley Dickinson Hospital will have an allegiance with our Senior Health Services. They will be part of the planning and a resource network for Lisa.

MCOA Conference:

Nancy said that the staff would not be going to the conference this year.

PVTA Update:

Nancy reported that on September 12 the PVTA would announce the new carrier for the van service to replace MVTA. The transition will begin in September but the new carrier will not begin service until January 2008.

Vehicle Needed:

Nancy said that it would be very helpful for the Senior Center to have a small car or van on hand to deliver meals or give a ride on occasion. She will approach some dealers in town to see if we can get a small car for a low price or as a donation.

40th Anniversary of COA:

Nancy reminded us that the COA is 40 years old this year. She wondered how we would like to celebrate our birthday. Do we want to invite past members for a social gathering or party? Next year the Senior Center will be 40 years old. Nancy asked for ideas from others.

Elsie said the anniversary would be a good time to promote and publicize the services we provide and a good opportunity to announce the "Friends" in newspaper articles with photos.

Maura suggested a full supplement in the Gazette with a focus on all of the activities at the Center - the Senior Health Services, the Counseling Center, and all of the classes and programs that we offer. Elsie suggested contacting Linda Conklin at the Gazette about finding advertisers to pay for such a supplement.

David wondered if we could reach out to all the folks who get Meals on Wheels delivered and include them in a party.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Friends Update:

Nancy reported that the Secretary of State has approved our Friends application. We are just waiting for the Tax ID number. Contributions have started to come in. A COA member who is also a Town Meeting member will have to go before Town Meeting in the fall to ask them to approve the transfer of the money from the Trust to the Friends.

October 25th Retreat Planning:

Stephanie reported that she, Doris and Nancy are looking at presenting a program to help the COA clarify where we are today, where we want to be in the future and how to get there. Such an assessment may seem basic but it is very valuable because of changes that take place - the COA changes, the needs of the people we serve change, and our resources change. **The retreat will be held October 25 from 8:30 - 1:00.**

Demographic Data Sources:

David has been exploring ways to get a clear detailed picture of the Amherst senior population we serve. He has accessed the 2000 census data for the Town of Amherst but there is little detail on seniors in that report. Doing our own mail survey would cost money and would probably not yield a large enough response to do cross tabulation. David contacted the State Data Center at UMass. They provided him with a lot of detail from the 2000 census including 50 pages of tables. He also received information from the Administration on Aging, which has details on the 60 plus population for every town in the US. David will study all of the material this fall and winter and compile a report for the COA.

Nancy mentioned that the Senior Center is obliged to do a survey every 10 years. The next one is due in 2010. We need to begin thinking about questions to ask and what information we want to obtain on the survey.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Highland Valley Elder Services: There was no HVES meeting held in August.

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

Rosemary reported that the Town now has a Draft Master Plan. It is available on the Town website. The Idea Gathering sessions happened almost one year ago when about 500 members of the community expressed ideas, wishes, and desires for what kind of community they wanted for Amherst in the future. Those ideas were carefully considered and turned into **Goals and Objectives** by the seven Work Groups -- **Land Use, Economic Development, Housing, Services and Facilities, Transportation and Circulation, Natural and Cultural Resources, and Open Space and Recreation**. Each Work Group then formulated specific **Strategies** that describe how to achieve the Goals and Objectives. ACP (the consulting group hired by the Town) used the Work Groups material to create elements of the Master Plan.

Subsequently, a lengthy survey was mailed out at random to members of the community. 665 people responded to the 30 questions and there were 43 pages of additional comments. The public was also invited to make comments on the Town website. All comments are being considered as we further edit and revise the Draft Master Plan. Results of the Survey indicate much of what the Master Plan already reflects as the values and interests of those who live and work in Amherst. For example, it emphasizes denser housing around Town Center and Village Centers, smaller homes on smaller lots, more student housing nearer to campus rather than in town, more affordable housing

for seniors, and diversity of housing in new developments. People expressed a desire to preserve the open space and historic features of Amherst. The Plan asks for expansion of sidewalks, bike lanes, and bus service. It recommends more areas zoned for industrial research parks and commercial uses, plus an improved business climate.

ACP has provided an Implementation document as part of the Master Plan, which is a guide as to how to use the Plan. It advises that departments be cognizant of recommendations when preparing work programs and budgets; that zoning should be updated; that the Master Plan should undergo a full updating process every 5 years; among other things.

In November Town Meeting will be asked to endorse the Master Plan and approve each element before sending it to the Planning Board for final approval. There will be an Open House on September 27 to view and share the Draft Master Plan with the public before the adoption process.

COA STAFF REPORTS

Counseling Center Update:

Maura referred to the new format of the Activities report. The numbers from the Counseling Center in that report indicate that Sheri Weintraub, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, had 15 sessions with 8 elders and/or caregivers during August. That is a large increase. Maura sent her 10 referrals. Two of the referrals expressed that they felt more comfortable working with an experienced counselor rather than with students. Maura expects to have an article in the Amherst Bulletin about the Counseling Center, introducing Sheri Weintraub and Marga Coler.

Survey of 80-90 Year Olds Progress Report:

Marlene prepared a lengthy report and handout about the Outreach Program, which began in 2005. The purpose of the program is to determine unmet needs of Amherst residents age 60 and older and to enhance the dignity, support the independence and maintain the health of Amherst elders. Using lists from the Town Clerk's office, 21 elders age 90 and older have been interviewed. There are 735 elders age 80-89 in Amherst of which 534 live independently. They will be considered for interview next.

Elsie asked if we could be more proactive in reaching out to elders who do not have a plan for what to do if they can no longer live independently, as some of the interviewees indicated.

Nancy commented that such ideas bring up the "larger picture". She reminded us about the pervasive impact of the current deficit budget for the Town. As a result, for example, at the Senior Center we feel the loss of Marlene's hours. She does so much work with the student volunteers. More and more people use our services. We are very stretched, thus we cannot embark on a lot of the programs we would like to. Many Town departments work together and rely on each other. Yet every department is stretched. The Maintenance department is one example. Two of the staff are undergoing cancer therapy but their hours can't be covered because of a hiring freeze. A State program to put smoke detectors into senior's home for free cannot happen because the Fire Department no longer has an employee available to help us with that. The annual police/senior picnic had to be cancelled. Town Hall is closed some days for business. The Senior Center can never close. We need to be there for the lunch program. The morale is low. Yet we want to do so many things – pursue ideas such as Elsie suggested, get ready for Baby Boomers, pursue ideas for the future, follow the Comprehensive Plan. We want to grow but we struggle not to drown in the work we have. Next year's budget will no doubt require further staff cuts. If it weren't for the 240 or more volunteers we could not cope. That is the reality in Amherst.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:17 AM.

The next meeting will be held on October 11, 2007 at 9 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary